

#SELF-CONFIDENCE

How to Boost Your Own Confidence in 5 Minutes a Day

"Self-confidence isn't a magical trait bestowed on a lucky few, it's a skill that anyone can cultivate."



Would you like to head into the New Year feeling, and projecting, more confidence? You can increase your own confidence. It turns out, you don't have to take a course or set yourself some major challenge. Instead, it's something that you can do yourself in a few minutes a day. That insight comes from Adi Jaffe, Ph.D., a lecturer in Psychology at UCLA and author specializing in Mental Health and Addiction. In a recent article for *Psychology Today*, Jaffe explains how forming a few simple daily

What are these daily habits that can make you more confident over time?

1. Set yourself achievable goals

Many experts have observed that giving yourself small, achievable goals, and then celebrating those wins is a proven way to improve your confidence and help you reach those goals. That sets you up for a virtuous cycle, where reaching one goal makes you more confident about the next one. "This prac-

2. Meditate for just five minutes

"Even a very brief bit of daily meditation can have a powerful effect on your confidence level," Jaffe writes. It works because

3. Get some exercise

What the heck does physical exercise have to do with your self-confidence? More than you might think. "Exercise releases dopamine and endorphins, feel-good chemicals that boost mood, motivation, and confidence," Jaffe writes. Your goal here is to improve your mood and your confidence levels, not to

4. Surround yourself with positive people

"I recommend curating a social circle that is a mix of both highly supportive people as well as others who can model the sort of life you are looking to grow into," Jaffe writes. Warren Buffett probably agrees. He's often said that we are the average of the five people we spend



38 YEARS AFTER HER DEATH



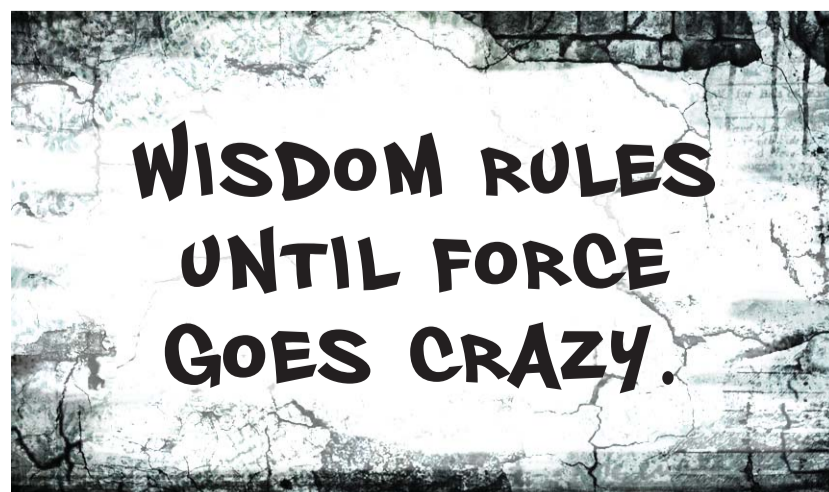
Dr. Shoma A. Chatterji
Film Scholar,
Journalist & Author

Do you know that Smita Patil began her career as a Marathi language newsreader in Mumbai? She landed in films when Shyam

Benegal saw her reading the news and decided to cast her in his film *Charandas Chor*, made primarily for children. But her role in this film was quite brief and she really came into her own with her debut in Shyam Benegal's *Manthan* (1976). Smita Patil was very thin, dark complexioned, and had a seductive voice. She was far from beautiful in the 'Hindi film' sense of the term. "It is her mobile face I noticed and that was enough for me to choose her for *Manthan*," Benegal is reported to have said. Manthan traces a small set of poor farmers of Kheda district in Gujarat, who had the vision and foresight to act in a way that was good for the society and not for self alone. Under leaders like local social worker Tribhovanadas Patel, who took up the cause of the farmers, led to the formation of Kaira District Milk Producers' Union. Soon, the pattern was repeated in each district of Gujarat, which, in turn, led to



THE WALL



the formation of Amul, a dairy cooperative in Anand, Gujarat in 1946, which is today jointly owned by some 2.6 million milk producers in Gujarat, India.

Smita Patil died 37 years ago of a brain fever, just when her cup of happiness seemed to be brimming over. She had just become a mother, a cherished dream for an actress, who had spent a major part of her youth under greasepaint facing the arc lights. But she has left herself behind in bits and pieces through her screen characters and through her performances in umpteen films in a career roughly spanning a little more than a decade.

She is the first Indian actress to have had the prestige of two retrospectives of her films in France in 1984. Her films were screened both at the La Rochelle Film Festival and at the Cinematheque Francaise. Yet, her reaction to the news was the most unassuming in a world where blowing one's own trumpet is part of the rat-race. "Maybe, it was just luck, or maybe, it was the rapport I had established with the French organizers when I had gone there for festivals earlier. I do not know why they picked me and not anybody else," she said.

But was it just luck? Can luck work right through an illustrious but brief career, which fetched her eight awards, ranging from the National Film Awards for Best Actress, through several Filmfare Awards and one award from the Bengal Film Journalists' Association? The answer is no, considering that her career as an actress had a relatively limited

span of a little more than a decade. *Bhoomika* (The Role, 1977) was based on the autobiography titled *Sangtye Aika* (Listen to this), penned by a famous Marathi-speaking actress of her time, Hansa Wadkar. For Bhoomika, Shyam Benegal based the film on the once-noted film actress Hansa Wadkar's autobiography and had actress Smita Patil playing Wadkar in the film. The film won two National Awards, Best Actress for Smita Patil and Best Screenplay for Satyadev Dubey, Shyam Benegal and Girish Karnad. The film also won the Best Film at the 25th Filmfare Awards. On the centenary of Indian cinema in April 2013, Forbes included her performance in the film on its list, '25 Greatest Acting Performances of Indian Cinema.' The Washington Post in the 'an enigmatically feisty final performance.' In 2015, film critic Maithili Rao wrote Patil's biography titled *Smita Patil: A Brief Incandescence*. The Indian Posts and Telegraphs published a postage stamp to commemorate her memory in 2013.

In Kumar Shahani's film *Tarang*, the capitalist boss, Rahul (Amol Palekar), makes love to Janki (Smita Patil), the wife of a deceased worker of the factory, which he is manager of. He then offers her money, reducing her to a common prostitute. Initially, she rebels against this humiliation. But, on subsequent occasions, she insists on being paid and uses the



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#SMITA PATIL



money to further the workers' struggle for better wages and living conditions. Money, as a sexualized metaphor as well as an item of exchange, becomes the basis for women's simultaneous depending and independence. Smita Patil's performance is enriched with her subtle dignity, though she plays an *ayah* in the film. The climax finds her in surrealistic space where she tells Rahul that she is no Janki, but is an eternal woman.

However, her earthy looks, dusky skin, svelte form, elegant neck and mobile voice gave her the fluidity of slipping under the skin of the Amma in Rabindra Dharman's *Chakra* as easily as it vested her with the smoothness of merging with the emotionally insecure and hyper Kavita in Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth*. The tribal wood-gathering woman in Govind Nihalani's *Akrosh*, or the social worker with her silent rebellion in Dr. Jabbar Patel's *Subah*, the committed actress in Mrinal Sen's *Akaler Sandhane*, the woman who aroused the women of an entire village in rebellion against a single man in Ketan Mehta's *Mitrah Masala*, the victimized mother in Utpalendu Chakravarty's *Deb Shishu*, the crippled woman with a mind of her own in Sayeed Mirza's *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aita Hai*, the adulterous wife in G. Aravindan's *Chidambaram*, and the strange metaphor of Sita in Kumar Shahani's *Tarang*, the angry wife of the dead untouchable in Satyajit Ray's *Sadgati* are

class mores her parents had instilled in her, including her parents who disapproved of the relationship. Smita died a few weeks after she gave birth to Prateek, her son.



During this period, she fell in love with her co-actor, Raj Babbar, a married man with two growing children and a wonderful achiever wife in Nadira Babbar, who ran her own theatre group and was hopelessly trapped in a conflicting relationship. Smita found herself in love with a married man. She defied the traditional, middle-class mores her parents had instilled in her, including her parents who disapproved of the relationship. Smita died a few weeks after she gave birth to Prateek, her son.

Her career in mainstream cinema proved that it was not luck after all. Except for a couple of films such as *Namak Halal* and *Shakti*, both opposite Amitabh Bachchan, Smita was a total misfit in commercial films. She could not dance to save her life. She lacked the glamorous screen presence that her peers in the mainstream had. She looked incredibly incongruous, almost pathetic in Prakash Mehra's *Ganghroo*. She wistfully announced that she wanted to be rich, adding that it was not possible to be rich unless she worked in mainstream films. She did some middle-of-the-road films too such as *Aaj Ki Awaz* under the BR hammer, *Aashir Kyon* opposite Rajesh Khanna, *Jawab*, plus a few more films opposite Raj Babbar.

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Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

Revealing insights on women's health, exploring preventive measures, empowering communities to champion well-being beyond boundaries. 99% of cases of cervical cancer are linked to a persistent infection of the human papilloma virus (HPV), which is a sexually transmitted disease. Because there is a vaccine against HPV, cervical cancer is a highly preventable disease, in up to 93% of cases. The purpose of this event is obviously to prevent and end the impact that cervical cancer has on women. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways in honour of Cervical Cancer Prevention Month, at this time and all throughout the year.



the entry of Raj Babbar in her life. Smita found herself delicately poised in a tightrope walk between her personal beliefs about the wronging of the woman and her personal involvement with a married man.

A characteristic quality of Smita was that though she was always in poor health, she never allowed it to interfere with her commitments. She had a very weak stomach, and suffered from chronic colitis. She often ran high fever. But she took all this in her stride, refusing to make an issue of it. In fact, it was her total disregard of her doctor's dictates that finally led to her death. A few days following her delivery in December 1986, the film industry in Mumbai went on strike. Smita was at the helm of affairs and led *morchas* within a few days after having delivered her baby, much against the advice of her doctor and her mother Vidya Patil, a trained nurse. Her father was an active politician, but the parents were very progressive and people-oriented, which probably remained in Smita's genes.

With two *Urvashi* Awards (National Award for Best Actress) behind her, two French retrospectives, a bunch of the best films in Indian cinema made around that time, Smita Patil lived the most fulfilling life she could have, within the brief span of her young age of 31. It is the quality of life that matters, the quality of time you have spent in this world that counts, and that is what people like Smita Patil have proved time and again.

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By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

#MIND & BODY

Handwriting activates broader brain networks than typing

As digital tools replace traditional handwriting in classrooms, concerns have arisen about how this shift might impact learning.

While keyboards dominate modern classrooms, a new study in *Frontiers in Psychology* suggests that handwriting may be irreplaceable when it comes to learning. Researchers found that writing by hand activates far more extensive and interconnected brain networks compared to typing, particularly in regions linked to memory and sensory processing. These findings provide new evidence that handwriting engages the brain in unique ways, raising concerns about the growing reliance on digital tools for education.

As digital tools replace traditional handwriting in classrooms, concerns have arisen about how this shift might impact learning. Typing on a keyboard is often preferred because it enables children to express themselves more quickly and with less physical strain. However, prior research has shown that handwriting is linked to better memory retention, letter recognition, and overall learning outcomes. The fine motor movements involved in handwriting seem to stimulate the brain differently than typing, but the exact neurological mechanisms behind this difference remained unclear.

To investigate, the researchers focused on brain connectivity, which describes how different brain regions work together to accomplish a task. By comparing brain activity during handwriting and typing, the team hoped to uncover whether the physical act of handwriting promotes more extensive brain communication patterns, patterns thought to support learning and memory formation.

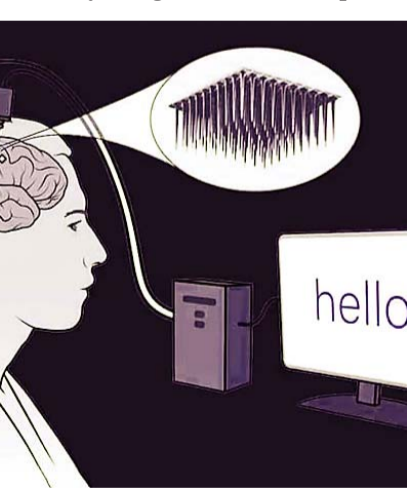
"The brain research on handwriting is really a spin-off of our infant brain research in the Nulab, our Developmental Neuroscience laboratory at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), where we show that babies are born with a brain that is ready to learn from day one," said study author Audrey van der Meer, a professor of Neuropsychology.

For their new study, the researchers recruited 40 university students in their early twenties. To ensure consistency, only right-handed participants were included in the analysis, as determined by a standardized handedness assessment. After excluding participants whose data contained artifacts, the final



sample consisted of 36 individuals. Each participant completed two tasks, handwriting and typing. For the handwriting condition, participants used a digital pen to write visually presented words in cursive directly on a touchscreen. For the typing condition, participants typed the same words on a keyboard using only their right index finger. Participants wrote or typed each word repeatedly within a 25-second window while brain activity was recorded. To avoid visual distractions, the words did not appear on the screen during typing.

Brain electrical activity was measured using high-density electroencephalography (EEG), a method that captures rapid changes in brain activity using a net of sensors placed



on the scalp. The researchers focused on connectivity, analyzing how strongly different brain regions communicated with each other while participants wrote or typed.

The results revealed striking differences in brain activity between handwriting and typing. Handwriting activated far more widespread and interconnected brain networks than typing, particularly in the theta (3.5-7.5 Hz) and alpha (8-12.5 Hz) frequency bands. "These brain waves, particularly in the lower frequency range, are associated with memory formation, sensory processing, and attention."

The most significant connectivity patterns during handwriting emerged in central and parietal brain regions, which are involved in processing motor control, sensory input, and higher-order cognitive tasks. In contrast, typing produced far less synchronized activity across these areas, indicating that pressing keys involves far less integration of visual, motor, and sensory input than forming letters by hand.

The researchers proposed that handwriting's benefits arise from the spatio-temporal complexity of the task. Handwriting requires precise coordination of vision, motor commands, and sensory feedback as the brain continuously adjusts finger and hand movements to shape each letter. Typing, on the other hand, relies on repetitive keystrokes that provide minimal motor variation or feedback.

"In our handwriting research, it becomes clear that the brain works differently when writing by hand as opposed to when typing on a keyboard," van der Meer explained. "Precisely forming letters by hand requires fine motor skills and involves the body and senses to a much larger degree than typing on a keyboard does. As a result, handwriting involves more of the brain, requiring the brain to communicate fast and efficiently between its active parts."

"Our latest results show widespread brain connectivity for handwriting but not for typewriting, suggesting that the spatio-temporal pattern from visual and proprioceptive information, obtained through the precisely controlled hand movements when using a pen, contribute extensively to the brain's connectivity patterns that promote learning."